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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 001653

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/ERA - BISHARAT AND EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

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TAGS: [PREL](#), [MARR](#), [MOPS](#), [CH](#), [SU](#), [AU](#), [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE TO AUSTRIA IN ADVANCE OF THE MAY 23 EU
FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING (GAERC)

REF: STATE 90085

Classified By: Economic-Political Counselor Gregory E. Phillips. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) EconPolCouns met on May 18 with Andreas Riecken, the Austrian Foreign Ministry's European Correspondent, to present reftel points and discuss the May 23-24 General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting.

12. (C) Riecken made the following comments concerning the points in reftel:

-- On the China arms embargo, Riecken said it was his personal interpretation that Luxembourg Foreign Minister Asselborn's May 11 statement referring to a possible lift of the embargo during the Luxembourg presidency was simply a bureaucratic nod to the mandate the Presidency had received from the European Council in December, and not an attempt to energize the issue. In December, achieving a lift by the end of June looked "easy," Riecken said. Now, everyone knew that "times have changed," in view of both the strenuous U.S. objections to a lift and Chinese actions like the Anti-Secession Law. Riecken noted that the China arms embargo was not on the GAERC agenda.

-- On European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), Riecken noted that Defense Ministers would meet for an hour and a half Monday morning, starting at 0900. Foreign Ministers would then continue the discussions. Concerning staff-to-staff cooperation between NATO and the European Defense Agency, Riecken said that, while this was certainly a goal, some basic problems stood in the way, including Turkey/Cyprus and France.

-- On Sudan, African Union chair Konare met with the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) and with NATO in Brussels on May 17, Riecken said. The EU was considering what it could do to provide more support in a more coordinated way. Riecken said it seemed that a lot of countries were taking action, but there was no EU chapeau, and there was a lack of information sharing between the EU and NATO.

13. (C) Riecken said other items on the agenda were the Middle East and the tsunami action plan.

-- Discussion on the Middle East could touch on any issue, he said. He thought Gaza and the Wolfensohn mission would likely come up, in addition to the Palestinian parliamentary elections on July 17. Lebanon, Iran and Iraq might also come up, he said.

-- On the tsunami, Riecken said there had been an action plan from January 31 to improve EU capabilities to coordinate consular, military and development assistance efforts in response to disasters. The GAERC was now going to discuss a status report on these efforts.
Brown